

**IN THE CLAIMS**

*Kindly amend the claims as shown in the following complete listing of all claims:*

1. (canceled)
2. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 28, wherein the switching means ~~act~~ acts on each of the first shutoff elements according to the following single sequence of operations:

opening each first shutoff element for a preset time and/or quantity of first or second fluid until the first branch is full of the selected fluid and the fluid is discharged from the handpieces; and

closing each of the first shutoff elements after the first branch is full of the selected fluid and the fluid is discharged from the handpieces.

3. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 28, wherein the switching means ~~act~~ acts on each of the first, second and third shutoff elements in such a way as to perform the following operations in succession:

switching the supply of the first branch from the main line to the second branch through a combination or succession of operations to close the third shutoff element on the main line and to open the second shutoff element on the second branch;

opening each of the first shutoff elements for a preset time or quantity of fluid, so as to create a preset flow of the second fluid from the second branch into the first branch, and thus completely renewing the fluid in the first branch with the flow of the second fluid from the second branch until the second fluid is discharged from the handpieces;

Amendment After Final Rejection – Ser. No. 09/955,273  
November 15, 2005  
Page 3

closing each of the first shutoff elements after a preset time or when a preset quantity of fluid is finished flowing;

further switching the supply of the first branch from the second branch to the main line through a combination or succession of operations to close the second shutoff element on the second branch and to open the third shutoff element on the main line so as to return to the condition in which the first branch is supplied with the first fluid;

opening each of the first shutoff elements for a preset time or quantity of fluid, so as to create a preset flow of the first fluid into the first branch, and thus completely flushing the first branch with the first fluid until the first fluid is discharged from the handpieces;

closing each of the first shutoff elements after a preset time or when a preset quantity of fluid is finished.

4. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 28, wherein the first container for the handpieces forms part of the dental unit, being built into or mounted on the body of the dental unit, and ~~is~~ being equipped with a conduit leading into a drain.

5. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 28, wherein the first container for the handpieces is a separate part applied to or positioned near the dental unit when treatments are being performed on the first fluid supply branch.

6. (canceled)

Amendment After Final Rejection – Ser. No. 09/955,273  
November 15, 2005  
Page 4

7. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 1~~ claim 28, further comprising a third branch that supplies an alternative third fluid, used instead of the first fluid, in the main line and in the first ~~connecting~~ branch, the third fluid being contained in a corresponding second tank.

8. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the second and third branch ~~is~~ branches are equipped with ~~a respective closure~~ respective closures used to connect up the first and second tanks of the fluids to be supplied and with respective tubes connected to the second and third branches, each tube being inserted into the corresponding tank to draw the fluid from ~~inside it~~ inside the corresponding tank on a control from the first control means.

9. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the second supply branch starts at the corresponding second branch closure and connects directly to the third branch closure immediately downstream of the ~~corresponding tube of the third branch closure~~, so that the second fluid and the alternative third fluid ~~used instead of the first fluid can~~ are, by the second control means, be supplied alternately through a single second branch, which is connected to the main line.

10. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the second branch ~~(7)~~ extends from the corresponding second branch closure and connects directly to the closure of the third branch that supplies the alternative third fluid.

11. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the second and third branch closures are fitted, at the top end of each of the respective tubes, with

respective valve elements designed to operate in conjunction with the second control means to enable the corresponding fluid to flow, when required, into the single second branch.

12. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the closure of the second branch that supplies the fluid has a channel connected to the third branch to convey the fluid in the direction of the other closure.

13. (original) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the closure of the third branch that supplies the alternative fluid has a T-channel to allow the fluids to flow alternately into the main line.

14. (original) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the closures are equipped with respective non-return valves, at the top ends of the respective tubes.

15. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the second control means for controlling the supply of each of the fluids ~~comprise~~ comprises an air channel made in each of the closures operated by a unit designed to generate pressure inside the respective tanks so as to allow the supply of the selected fluid.

16. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the second branch connecting the two closures is equipped with second valve means designed to safely shut off the second branch when the alternative fluid is being used.

Amendment After Final Rejection – Ser. No. 09/955,273  
November 15, 2005  
Page 6

17. (original) The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the alternative fluid is purified water.

18. (original) The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the alternative fluid is purified water with patient-specific drugs added.

19. (original) The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the alternative fluid is a sterile, isotonic, saline fluid.

20. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 6~~ claim 7, wherein the first and second tanks are of the disposable type.

21. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 6~~ claim 7, wherein the first and second tanks are of the type that can be sterilized and reused.

22. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 1~~ claim 28, where the dental unit is equipped with a microprocessor to control its main and auxiliary functions, and the first control ~~means~~, means comprises a pushbutton located on the dental unit, the pushbutton being are controlled by the microprocessor ~~in such a way as~~ to allow the coordinated opening and closing of the first, second and third shutoff elements according to preset parameters that can be stored in the microprocessor and that control the flow time and/or the quantity of the fluid.

23. (canceled).

Amendment After Final Rejection – Ser. No. 09/955,273  
November 15, 2005  
Page 7

24. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 1~~ claim 28, wherein the control means comprises a pair of pushbuttons located on the dental unit, one of which is connected to settable timing means that are activated when the first shutoff elements open or close or when the main line is full and that are designed to re-close or re-open the shutoff elements when the preset time has elapsed; the other pushbutton being connected to the second and third shutoff elements and being designed to switch from one to the other according to the treatments to be performed.

25. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 28, wherein each of the first, second and third shutoff elements is connected to an operating unit constituting the switching means connected to the first control means.

26. (currently amended) The apparatus according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 28, where the first fluid supply branch comprises, as one of the patient use-points, a fourth branch that supplies a fluid to a tumbler and that is equipped with a fourth shutoff element, wherein the first control means are also connected to the fourth shutoff element of the fourth branch, which is equipped with a switching unit so that the fourth branch can be treated in the same way as the other branches.

27. (canceled)

28. (new) An apparatus for supplying and sanitizing the water line of a dental unit, the water line comprising:

Amendment After Final Rejection – Ser. No. 09/955,273  
November 15, 2005  
Page 8

a main fluid supply line adapted to be connected at one end to at least one source of a first fluid and connected at the other end to the dental unit through at least one first branch for supplying a set of use-points comprising a plurality of handpieces;

first shutoff elements each located on the first branch that supplies the handpieces, each of said first shutoff elements adapted to selectively allow fluid flow from said first branch to a respective handpiece when required;

the apparatus comprising:

at least one second branch connected to the first branch for conveying a second or a third fluid into the main line, the second branch and the main line being equipped with respective second and third shutoff elements designed to switch the supply of the first branch between: (i) the first fluid flowing from the main fluid supply line; or, (ii) the fluid flowing from the second branch;

a first interchangeable tank connected to the second branch for supplying the second branch with either the second or the third fluid;

a first container for holding the handpieces or ends of conduits connecting with the dental unit during sterilization, disinfection, flushing or cleaning;

first control means operatively connected to the first, second and third shutoff elements for conducting the coordinating opening and closing of each of the first, second and third shutoff elements according to the type of treatment to be achieved;

switching means connected to the first control means for controlling the opening and closing of the first, second and third shutoff elements, said switching means being manually or automatically triggered to perform cycles of treatment on the first branch with at least one of: (i) the first fluid; and, (ii) the fluid conveyed by the second branch.